



L to R: Richard Adams, Peter Holder, Andy Redfern, The Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Bhawna Sarin, Dr Michael Price, John Abbott

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Bishop of Newcastle visits Northumbria to tackle questions on the social economy

Northumbria University's [Newcastle Business School](#) recently welcomed [Bishop of Newcastle The Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Hartley](#), to an event focusing on driving inclusive growth in the North East social economy.

Bishop Helen-Ann joined a roundtable discussion on the topic of the social economy – supporting organisations and enterprises to work together for public benefit – exploring how inclusive growth can be driven in this way

across the region, how the Church can help support these efforts and whether changes to policy and practice could help the social economy to flourish.

Bishop Helen-Ann is lead bishop in the House of Lords for economics and business. She is also a member of the Social, Cooperative and Community Economy All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) which was created to increase understanding of diverse mission-led business models, such as social enterprises, co-ops, mutuals, employee-owned and community businesses, in order to improve support and enable growth.

Speaking about the event, Bishop Helen-Ann said: “I was delighted to be invited to visit Northumbria University’s business school and to participate in the round table conversation. What I found particularly illuminating were identifying some of the unique challenges we face in the North East region around growing a healthy, socially responsive economy.

“The work that Dr Price and his colleagues are attending to in making the North East voice heard is vital. Research-based narratives are important and I know the discussions I participated in during my visit will help inform the work I do as a member of the House of Lords as I seek to be a voice for our region. I pay tribute to Northumbria University for its leadership and innovation in its Business School and I look forward to further opportunities to engage.”

The roundtable brought together Northumbria academics and practitioners including [Dr Michael Price](#), Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship and [Richard Adams OBE](#), Visiting Professor in Social Entrepreneurship, who has spent his working life founding and developing successful charitable, community-owned, or co-operative enterprises, including the UK fair trade organisations Tearcraft and Traidcraft.

Speaking on the importance of collaboration, Mr Adams said: “The need to make the world a better place has never been more obvious or more difficult. The region has been the home of many innovative and successful faith-based social enterprises ranging from community enriching local programmes to businesses with an international reach that challenge uncaring market forces. I believe we have the capacity by working together to make a real difference.”

Also in attendance at the roundtable were Andy Redfern, Founder and Director of Green Heart Collective, a community interest company based in

Gateshead, and Peter Holder, Founder and Director of Microsite, a business supporting sustainable forestry, urban greening, and community-driven projects. They were joined by Northumbria doctoral candidates John Abbott and Bhawna Sarin.

The visit was organised by Dr Price, whose work highlights the importance of spirituality in developing successful social enterprises. “It was a pleasure to welcome Bishop Helen-Ann to Northumbria University for a productive roundtable discussion,” he explained.

“Our conversation focused on the development and long-term sustainability of social enterprises, which play a vital role in supporting communities across the North East. Our research highlights the important role faith can play in fostering a shared understanding of social challenges, as well as in shaping practical, effective solutions. I look forward to collaborating with Bishop Helen-Ann to strengthen the region’s social economy and help address the pressing social issues facing our communities.”

Northumbria plays a leading role in the economic and social transformation of the North East and beyond by creating new knowledge, powering an inclusive economy and driving social mobility.

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